

**Focus Macomb: A Partnership for Economic Development
Business Development Committee Meeting
Baker College
September 19, 2007
Meeting Summary**

Members Present:

William Andre – Hydra-Lock Corporation
Maria Stella Castronova – Stella Specialty Sweets
Michael Claassen – Schaeffler Group
Jim Daniels – REI Group
Melanie Davis – Macomb County Chamber of Commerce
Larry Humphrey – Burtek, Inc.
Rick Kincaid – Co-Chair - K & F Electronics
Jack Murphy – Fidelity National Title Company
Bill Quinlan – Quinlan Assoc. Architect
Ron Reed – Co-Chair
Jon Peterson – AT&T
Ronald Robinson – Ronald E. Robinson, CPA PC
Grace Shore – Macomb County Chamber of Commerce
Terence Thomas – St. John Health
Don Torline (Liaison) Baker College
Kathy Vosburg – (Liaison) Macomb County Board of Commissioners
Chester Zochowski – REI Group

Members Not Present:

Luke Bonner – City of Sterling Heights
Ron Chriss – DTE Energy
Damiano DiMercurio – Dilusso Building Companies
Diana Kolakowski – City of Warren
Jim Krause – LongShot Golf/Acculabel Company
Ed Kubes – Lakeside Mall
Michael Malone – Partners in Architecture
Vito Pianello – The Private Bank
Ted Schollenberger – Mineral Springs Development

Others Present:

Steve Cassin, Sharon Laskowski, Lauren Royston
Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development

Opening: Co-Chairs Rick Kincaid and Ron Reed opened the meeting at Noon.

Introduction: A presentation of the activities of the Macomb County Planning and Economic Development Department and subcommittee reports are topics of discussion at the September 19, 2007 meeting.

Mr. Steve Cassin

Macomb County Department of Planning and Economic Development

Overview: Mr. Cassin provided an overview of staffing responsibilities, along with the many diverse activities undertaken by the department. All service areas contribute to the county's economic development strategy.

Highlights:

- The department has five divisions and is currently staffed by 33 employees.
- Economic Development Services is responsible for business attraction, retention and development, small business assistance, site location assistance, state and local incentives, along with brownfield activities. A brief review of this division's individual staff responsibilities was provided to the committee.
- Planning and Environmental Services is responsible for zoning and land use, building permit, downtown development, utility infrastructure, wetland, and floodplain data. This division also handles other development issues.
- Graphic and GIS Services is responsible for marketing material, mapping, presentations, and website assistance.
- Community Development Services is responsible for quality of life and diversity issues, homeowner assistance, and fair housing issues.
- Administrative Support Services provides a diverse variety of activities for staff support.
- The Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) counseled over 642 clients in 2006, totaling 5,463 counseling hours. There were 62 training events held during the year and 1,394 participants. 1,644 jobs were retained and 2,311 jobs created by the organization. Business counselors are provided for individual counseling on an appointment basis.
- A "Business Basics Seminar" is held monthly. The seminar provides basic steps to starting and operating a small business. "Selecting Your Legal Structure" seminars examine tax and non-tax considerations that every business owner must address before selecting a legal entity. Other seminars include "Tax Seminars," "Team SBA Financing Roundtables," and "Cost Effective Marketing Seminars."
- Mr. Cassin then presented an overview of the implementation of Focus Macomb Business Development Committee Recommendations by the department. Among the topics discussed were:
 - The enhancement of information to businesses about assistance available at the department and the assistance in the set-up and maintenance of websites.
 - Automation Alley and the Export Assistance Center will soon be occupying space on the 8th Floor of the Administration Building. The promotion of the county through conventions, foreign trade missions, and other opportunities is underway. For example, a trade mission to India is scheduled for October 2007.
 - The department is participating in a regional effort to request funding for a business accelerator in the county. Also, other efforts to encourage incubator space and shared-use facilities are underway.

Subcommittee Reports

Business Incubators and Accelerators Subcommittee

- Business incubators/accelerators encourage new business formation, provide a support process, provide a networking base, and support economic development and diversity in the community. These facilities can also transfer new technology and science products to commercialization.
- The main goal is to produce successful businesses that will be financially viable and freestanding.
- 84% of the business graduates remain in the community, among other advantages.
- Macomb County does not have a public incubator/accelerator, but one is planned through Automation Alley.
- Macomb County's government should work to establish a Michigan public university or a satellite campus, and assist in the development of incubators/accelerators.

Business Attraction Subcommittee

- The University of Michigan has a developmental division that assists startups. There are two investment funds that provide financing to startups. The startups are screened and actually have a higher chance of success.
- The subcommittee's idea is to encourage the investment firms to provide assistance to Macomb County's startups. A letter is being prepared at the present time.

County Executive Subcommittee

- The subcommittee's purpose is to evaluate the benefits to the business community regarding this alternate form of government.
- A county executive would provide leadership and be accountable to all residents of the county, among other advantages.
- The subcommittee has determined that it is in the county's best interest to have a county executive head the government body. Discussion ensued regarding surveying the committee regarding their support of this issue.

Networking Subcommittee

- Multi-media is important to the networking process. For example, a trade show in the Internet. A video was presented to the committee as an example of the process. Proper distribution and techniques are also important.
- Marketing tools are changing. People are too busy to read newspapers for any length of time. For example, use Comcast as a tool to preview manufacturing and retail companies. Use a video as a networking tool within a website. Everyone likes videos.

Small Business Management Subcommittee

- Improvement of small business management practices through telecommuting, mentoring, shared use facilities, creation of wireless network, and green initiatives.
- Access to small business advisory services through government sponsored programs. The development of a database of experienced small business owners and advisors to volunteer to mentor business owners.
- Macomb County should establish a Small Business Advisory Board to advocate for small business in the county.
- Wireless initiatives to connect people in rural areas and have access at a low cost. Promote home office usage, flex time and four-day work weeks.

Workforce Business Development Subcommittee

- Coordination with the Education Committee is important. The Education Committee's primary focus is on educational endeavors. For example, focusing on younger college students to keep their technical awareness within Michigan.
- Business Development Committee will promote ways to get the unemployed back to work. For example, work with public/private initiatives such as Michigan Works. Determine industry areas that have the highest need.
- John Bierbusse inquired if REI would hold an Open House for employers. He would highlight available services and we would invite several employers. The Open House is tentatively being scheduled for October 3 at 3:00.

Positive Press Task Force

- A website will assist businesses to source more products and services within their own area. Crain's Detroit Business would serve as a "pilot project" for the advertorial aspect. Macomb County Chamber would serve as a clearinghouse of business related good news stories for the media. Meetings were held with Issue Media Group to secure potential funding.
- Report to the County – reserve funding for advertising project, reserve funding for newsletter, promote and link to "Buy Macomb" website.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Business Development Committee will be held at Baker College on Wednesday – October 17, 2007 at Noon.

Closing

The September 19, 2007 meeting of the Business Development Committee was closed at approximately 2:50 p.m.